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**RETAIL E-COMMERCE SALES IN FOURTH QUARTER 2002 WERE \$14.3 BILLION, UP 28.2 PERCENT  
FROM FOURTH QUARTER 2001, CENSUS BUREAU REPORTS**

**Intention to Revise:** Quarterly retail e-commerce estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2001 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Unadjusted estimates will be revised for fourth quarter 1999 through fourth quarter 2002. Revised data are scheduled for release in May 2003.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that the estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the fourth quarter of 2002, not adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, was \$14.334 billion, an increase of 28.2 percent ( $\pm 5.0\%$ ) from the fourth quarter of 2001. Total retail sales for the fourth quarter of 2002 were estimated at \$869.6 billion, an increase of 1.6 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago.

The fourth quarter 2002 e-commerce estimate increased 29.3 percent ( $\pm 2.9\%$ ) from the third quarter of 2002 while total retail sales increased 5.1 percent ( $\pm 0.3\%$ ) from the prior quarter.

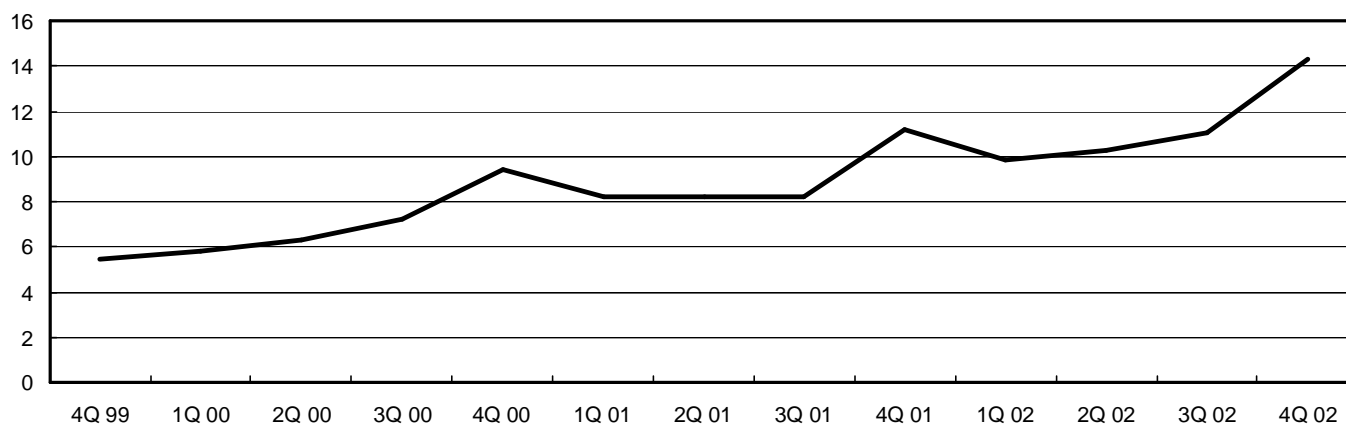
E-commerce sales in the fourth quarter of 2002 accounted for 1.6 percent of total sales, while in the fourth quarter of 2001 e-commerce sales were 1.3 percent of total sales. In the third quarter of 2002 e-commerce sales were 1.3 percent of total sales.

Total e-commerce sales for 2002 were estimated at \$45.6 billion, an increase of 26.9 percent ( $\pm 3.1\%$ ) from 2001. Total retail sales in 2002 increased 3.1 percent ( $\pm 0.2\%$ ) from 2001. E-commerce sales in 2002 accounted for 1.4 percent of total sales. E-commerce sales in 2001 accounted for 1.1 percent of total sales.

**Estimated Quarterly U.S. Retail E-commerce Sales:  
4<sup>TH</sup> Quarter 1999 – 4<sup>TH</sup> Quarter 2002**

(Data not adjusted for seasonal, holiday and trading-day differences)

Billions of dollars



The retail e-commerce sales estimate for the first quarter of 2003 is scheduled for release in May 2003. Annual e-statistics for the year 2001 covering manufacturing, wholesale, retail, and selected service industries are scheduled for release in March 2003. For more information, visit: [www.census.gov/estats](http://www.census.gov/estats).

E-commerce retail sales data and frequently asked questions (FAQ's) about e-commerce sales are available on the Census website at [www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html](http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html). For additional information about Census Bureau e-business measurement programs and plans visit [www.census.gov/estats](http://www.census.gov/estats).

**Table 1. Estimated Quarterly U.S. Retail Sales<sup>1</sup>: Total and E-commerce**

(Data in millions of dollars, not adjusted for seasonal, holiday and trading-day differences.)

Period	Retail Sales <sup>1</sup>		E-commerce as a Percent of Total Sales	Quarter-to-Quarter Percent Change		Year-to-Year Percent Change	
	Total	E-commerce <sup>2</sup>		Total Sales	E-commerce Sales	Total Sales	E-commerce Sales
1999 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	784,278	5,481	0.7	8.1	(NA)	9.1	(NA)
2000 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	711,600	5,814	0.8	-9.3	6.1	11.2	(NA)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	771,691	6,346	0.8	8.4	9.2	7.4	(NA)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	765,536	7,266	0.9	-0.8	14.5	5.5	(NA)
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	810,311	9,459	1.2	5.8	30.2	3.3	72.6
2001 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	724,224	8,256	1.1	-10.6	-12.7	1.8	42.0
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	805,245	8,246	1.0	11.2	-0.1	4.3	29.9
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	782,088	8,236	1.1	-2.9	-0.1	2.2	13.3
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	856,285	11,178	1.3	9.5	35.7	5.7	18.2
2002 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	743,810	9,880	1.3	-13.1	-11.6	2.7	19.7
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	825,243	10,265	1.2	10.9	3.9	2.5	24.5
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	827,585	11,083	1.3	0.3	8.0	5.8	34.6
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	869,588	14,334	1.6	5.1	29.3	1.6	28.2

NA Not available. † Revised. P Preliminary.

<sup>1</sup> Does not include Food Services.<sup>2</sup> E-commerce sales are sales of goods and services where an order is placed by the buyer or price and terms of sale are negotiated over an Internet, extranet, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) network, electronic mail, or other online system. Payment may or may not be made online.**Explanatory Notes**

Retail e-commerce sales are estimated from the same sample used in the Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) to estimate preliminary and final U.S. retail sales. Advance U.S. retail sales are estimated from a subsample of the MRTS sample that is not of adequate size to measure changes in retail e-commerce sales.

A stratified simple random sampling method is used to select approximately 11,000 retail firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over two million retail firms. The MRTS sample is probability based and represents all employer firms engaged in retail activities as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Coverage includes all retailers whether or not they are engaged in e-commerce. Online travel services, financial brokers and dealers, and ticket sales agencies are **not** classified as retail and are **not** included in either the total retail or retail e-commerce sales estimates. Nonemployers are represented in the estimates through the benchmarking operation. E-commerce sales are included in the total monthly sales estimates.

The MRTS sample is updated on an ongoing basis to account for new retail employer businesses (including those selling via the Internet), business deaths, and other changes to the retail business universe. Research was conducted to ensure that retail firms selected in the MRTS sample and engaged in e-commerce are representative of the universe of e-commerce retailers.

Firms are asked each month to report e-commerce sales separately. For each month of the quarter, data for nonresponding sampling units are imputed from responding sampling units falling within the same kind of business and sales size category.

Approximately 13 percent of the e-commerce sales estimate for fourth quarter 2002 was imputed. Imputed total retail sales data accounted for approximately 18 percent of the estimate of U.S. retail sales for the fourth quarter 2002.

For each month of the quarter, estimates are obtained by summing weighted sales (either reported or imputed). The monthly estimates are benchmarked to prior annual survey estimates. Estimates for the quarter are obtained by summing the monthly benchmarked estimates. For fourth quarter 2002, the estimate for December is a preliminary estimate. Therefore, the estimate is subject to revision.

### Reliability of Estimates

The margin of error for the change in U.S. retail e-commerce sales from the third quarter 2002 to the fourth quarter 2002 is approximately 2.8%, giving a range of 26.5% to 32.2%. Range estimates are computed based on the particular sample selected and canvassed. If we had repeated the process of drawing all possible samples and forming all corresponding range estimates, approximately 90 percent of these individual range estimates would have contained the quarter-to-quarter change in e-commerce sales computed from a complete enumeration of all retail firms on the sampling frame. Because the range above does not contain 0%, we can conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that retail e-commerce sales increased from the third quarter 2002 to the fourth quarter 2002.

**Table 2. Range Estimates for Estimated Dollar Volumes**

(Data in millions of dollars)

Period	Retail Sales		Retail E-commerce Sales	
	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1999 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	778,302	790,254	5,208	5,754
2000 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	705,397	717,803	5,430	6,198
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	765,202	778,180	5,975	6,717
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	758,521	772,551	6,850	7,682
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	802,980	817,642	8,958	9,960
2001 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	716,480	731,968	7,796	8,716
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	800,212	810,278	7,940	8,552
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	776,187	787,990	7,903	8,569
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	850,041	862,529	10,808	11,548
2002 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	738,426	749,194	9,539	10,221
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	819,406	831,080	9,826	10,704
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter <sup>r</sup>	821,187	833,983	10,563	11,603
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter <sup>p</sup>	862,865	876,311	13,634	15,034

<sup>r</sup> Revised. <sup>p</sup> Preliminary.

Note: Confidence intervals computed for estimates prior to those for the first quarter 2001 used the coefficients of variation estimated from the SIC-based sample.

*Estimates in this report are based on a sample, and therefore, are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. A general discussion of the estimates and survey methodology appears in BR/01-A Current Business Reports and on the Internet: <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.*

The U.S. Census Bureau, pre-eminent collector and disseminator of timely, relevant, and quality data about the people and the economy of the United States, conducts a population and housing census every 10 years, an economic census every five years, and more than 100 demographic and economic surveys every year, all of them evolving from the first census in 1790.